

COUNCIL FOR THE CITY OF SCRANTON

HELD:

Tuesday, January 5th, 2021

LOCATION:

VIA ZOOM

Maria McCool, RPR

Official Court Reporter

C O U N C I L     M E M B E R S :

WILLIAM GAUGHAN, PRESIDENT

KYLE DONAHUE, VICE PRESIDENT

MARK MCANDREW

JESSICA ROTHCHILD

THOMAS SCHUSTER

LORI REED, CITY CLERK

KATHY CARRERA, ASSISTANT CITY CLERK

KEVIN HAYES, COUNCIL SOLICITOR

(Pledge of Allegiance.)

MR. GAUGHAN: Please remain standing for a moment of silent reflection for our service men and women throughout the world and also for all those who have passed away in our community, especially Scranton fireman Steven Sunday who passed away tragically last week.

Steven was an outstanding fireman and person. Our sincere prayers go out to his friends and family. It is an unbelievable and unspeakable loss and tragedy for his family and for our City.

Let us also take a moment of silence for all of the people in our community, our country, in our world who have passed away from the coronavirus.

This pandemic has turned our world upsidedown. But we must remain hopeful and strong. We continue to pray for the doctors, nurses and researchers, all medical professionals who seek to heal and help those affected and who put themselves at risk in the process. May they have protection and peace.

Whether we are home or abroad,

1           surrounded by many people suffering from this  
2           illness or only a few, let us stick together,  
3           endure together, mourn together and in place of  
4           our anxiety, let us have hope and peace. Thank  
5           you. Thank you. Roll call, please, Miss  
6           Carrera?

7                   MS. CARRERA: Mr. Schuster.

8                   MR. SCHUSTER: Present.

9                   MS. CARRERA: Mr. McAndrew.

10                  MR. MCANDREW: Present.

11                  MS. CARRERA: Dr. Rothchild.

12                  DR. ROTHCHILD: Here.

13                  MS. CARRERA: Mr. Donahue.

14                  MR. DONAHUE: Here.

15                  MS. CARRERA: Mr. Gaughan.

16                  MR. GAUGHAN: Here. Thank you, Miss  
17           Carrera. An executive session was held at 5:45  
18           with our City Solicitor, Joe O'Brien and our  
19           City Treasurer, Mary Jo Sheridan to discuss  
20           potential litigation. Mrs. Reed, would you  
21           please dispense with the reading of the  
22           minutes?

23                   MS. REED: Thank you. THIRD ORDER.

24                   3-A. CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED FROM  
25           KOHANSKI COMPANY PC DATED DECEMBER 14, 2020

1           REGARDING CITY OF SCRANTON AUDIT.

2                   3-B.   CONTROLLER'S REPORT FOR MONTH  
3           ENDING NOVEMBER 30, 2020.

4                   3-C.   EMERGENCY DECLARATION ISSUED  
5           BY MAYOR PAIGE G. COGNETTI DATED DECEMBER 15,  
6           2020.

7                   3-D.   MINUTES OF THE SCRANTON POLICE  
8           PENSION COMMISSION MEETING HELD NOVEMBER 18,  
9           2020.

10                  3-E.   CITY OF SCRANTON REQUEST TO  
11           INCREASE LOCAL SERVICES TAX FOR FISCAL YEAR  
12           2021.

13                  3-F.   CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED FROM  
14           OECD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DATED DECEMBER 22, 2020  
15           REGARDING COVID-19 REIMBURSEMENTS THROUGH  
16           LACKAWANNA COUNTY CARES ACT FUNDING.

17                  3-G.   CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED FROM  
18           MAYOR PAIGE G. COGNETTI DATED DECEMBER 24, 2020  
19           REGARDING THE CITY OF SCRANTON 2021 OPERATING  
20           BUDGET.

21                  3-H.   MINUTES OF THE SCRANTON  
22           LACKAWANNA HEALTH & WELFARE AUTHORITY  
23           BOARD MEETING HELD AUGUST 20, 2020.

24                   MR. GAUGHAN:   Thank you, Mrs. Reed.  
25           Are there any comments on any of the Third

1           Order items? I'd like to make one comment.

2           3-G is correspondence that Council received  
3           from Mayor Cagnetti December 24th regarding the  
4           City of Scranton 2021 operating budget.

5                       So I just want to comment on that  
6           and respond to it. And if anybody had read the  
7           Scranton Times today, Council responded as a  
8           body -- as a legislative body in the City to  
9           the Mayor's letter. So I want to read parts of  
10          that letter into the record now and also just  
11          expand on a few points.

12                      And before I do that, let me say a  
13          few things. First of all, I think it's normal  
14          for a Council and a Mayor and administration  
15          not only to work together on a budget but also  
16          to have disagreements and have a debate -- an  
17          honest and open debate about the issues that  
18          face the City.

19                      And in this case I believe that's  
20          what happened. Although there were obviously  
21          some inaccurate claims and mischaracterizations  
22          made in the letter that was addressed to the  
23          citizens of Scranton by Mayor Cagnetti. And  
24          that's why Council chose to respond to that  
25          letter.

1                   And I'd like to read from it now for  
2                   a second. So the first thing I think we have  
3                   to remember with the proposed budget for 2021  
4                   that Mayor Cignetti presented to Council in  
5                   November was that it failed the most  
6                   fundamental criteria for any budget and that is  
7                   that it was not balanced.

8                   The Mayor's proposed budget failed  
9                   to include over a quarter of million dollars in  
10                  expenditures that the City is contractually  
11                  obligated to pay. In order to address this  
12                  deficiency, Council had to make several  
13                  amendments to the Mayor's budget to make  
14                  certain that it was balanced and that all  
15                  essential services and departments were fully  
16                  funded for the entire fiscal year.

17                  And we did work with the Mayor and  
18                  the Business Administrator to fix those issues.  
19                  After ensuring all departments and City  
20                  services would be properly funded for 2021, we  
21                  began our review of the substantive changes to  
22                  the City budget which were proposed by the  
23                  Mayor.

24                  I think to the astonishment of  
25                  Council -- all of Council, the Mayor proposed

1           nearly a million dollars in new positions and  
2           salary increases while we're in the midst of a  
3           global pandemic.

4                       And at the same time the Mayor  
5           reported to us that we were projecting a 4 and  
6           a half million dollar revenue shortfall in  
7           2021. So just think about that for a minute in  
8           terms of your own household. There's many  
9           people throughout the City who lost their job  
10          and you don't have the same amount of income  
11          this year as you did last year.

12                      So, you know, the people of Scranton  
13          wouldn't go out and buy a new boat or buy a new  
14          car or add on an excessive amount of  
15          expenditures to their household budget. That  
16          wouldn't make any sense. And it didn't really  
17          make a lot of sense in this case. And I think  
18          that's why we made a number of changes.

19                      Instead of fulfilling the claim to  
20          improve operational effectiveness and  
21          efficiency, the Mayor's budget created new  
22          positions and added expenditures which in some  
23          cases, not all cases, but in some cases we felt  
24          were redundant, inefficient and unnecessary  
25          including the following examples:



1                   And the first one was the creation  
2                   of a Chief of staff. And this was a position  
3                   that was in Mayor Cagnetti's budget for an  
4                   annual salary of \$70,000. The issue with this  
5                   position was that it would have essentially  
6                   fulfilled the duties which have been  
7                   historically performed by the Mayor.

8                   Mayor Cagnetti claimed in the letter  
9                   that the Chief of Staff would have ensured that  
10                  all departments are working together as  
11                  efficiently as possible and stakeholders were  
12                  engaged at every turn. It's my belief that  
13                  this -- that is the job of the Mayor.

14                 And it's certainly not the time to  
15                 add a position worth \$70,000 in the midst of  
16                 the financial issues that the City is having.  
17                 The Mayor also stated in her letter that the  
18                 absence of this position, the Chief of Staff  
19                 position does not lend itself to efficient  
20                 government operations or allow the Mayor the  
21                 capacity to respond to City Council and  
22                 stakeholder requests and questions within the  
23                 timeframes that we would all prefer.

24                 That statement caught me just as  
25                 totally absurd. What I'm reading when I look

1 at that is that now we have to wait for  
2 important information and answers to questions  
3 because the Mayor doesn't have a Chief of Staff  
4 or the people won't get answers or return phone  
5 calls because there's no Chief of Staff in the  
6 Mayor's office.

7 You know, that -- that's bad  
8 government. And that is certainly not any way  
9 to run the City and certainly not anything to  
10 put in a letter to Council that, you know  
11 because there is no Chief of Staff that now,  
12 you know, there's the potential that we're not  
13 going to get answers to questions, not only  
14 that we ask but that the people ask us. So I  
15 was very disturbed by that.

16 The second position was the creation  
17 of a Deputy Superintendent of Police. This was  
18 at a salary of \$100,978.22. This would  
19 essentially have fulfilled the duties which  
20 have been historically performed by Chief of  
21 Police.

22 And the major issue that I think  
23 most of us had with this was that the Mayor's  
24 plan to fund this position included taking a  
25 patrolman off the street. And that in my

1 opinion is the last thing that we need to do at  
2 this point in the City.

3 The creation of a manager in the  
4 Parks and Recreation Department at salary of  
5 \$50,000, the City already has a director for  
6 that department. And one of the plans that the  
7 Mayor had under her budget was to move the  
8 supervision of the employees in the Parks and  
9 Recreation Department under the Highways  
10 Department in DPW.

11 So you would have been adding a  
12 manager without any employees to actually  
13 supervise or manage. The Mayor stated in her  
14 letter that by Council reducing the role of the  
15 Parks and Recreation Manager and cutting  
16 neighborhoods from the department, the City's  
17 initiatives for parks, recreation and  
18 neighborhood engagement would be curtailed and  
19 slowed.

20 Again, I believe that that is  
21 totally absurd. Number one, there's already a  
22 director that makes \$52,500 a year. We don't  
23 need -- we don't believe we need another  
24 manager for \$50,000 a year. This is all work  
25 that the current director can do with any

1 initiatives that the Mayor has planned.

2 And the argument that because  
3 Council kept the title of the department the  
4 same as last year instead of Parks, Recreation  
5 and Neighborhoods that that would somehow slow  
6 things down doesn't make any sense at all.

7 And just a note, Council allocated  
8 funding for additional part-time employees to  
9 take care of over 30 parks throughout our City.  
10 And that was our argument I think all along  
11 that we know that we have a large park system  
12 in the City.

13 We also know that we don't have  
14 enough employees to cover the large park  
15 system. For example, McDade Park I think has  
16 maybe 10 or so employees dedicated to that one  
17 park in the county. We have a huge park at Nay  
18 Aug. We have parks all over the City. We have  
19 a very small amount of employees.

20 So adding a manager is not going to  
21 fix that issue. Council's plan I think was  
22 more efficient. You know, the other thing with  
23 the Parks Department, the Mayor in her letter  
24 seems to have a concern about the parks.

25 And I think we all do. But the

1 concern that I have I think we need to focus on  
2 rather than adding another position to pay  
3 \$50,000 is to make sure that Nay Aug is open  
4 for next year. That's a major, major concern  
5 of mine.

6 Nay Aug pool it's been reported that  
7 the Recreation Authority -- the Chairman of the  
8 Recreation Authority said it probably won't be  
9 open for next year. I'm assuming and praying  
10 to God that we'll have -- everyone will be able  
11 to get a vaccine next year. People are --  
12 young children throughout our City are going to  
13 want to swim.

14 So instead of focusing on not having  
15 a job that pays \$50,000 for a redundant manager  
16 position, why don't we focus on making sure  
17 that Nay Aug pool is open next year for our  
18 residents and our citizens. And that's  
19 something I can't understand escaped this  
20 administration because we knew that was an  
21 issue going back well into last year. There  
22 was money in the 2020 budget for the new liner.  
23 And for whatever reason it was not expended.

24 The Mayor also stated in her letter  
25 that because Council eliminated the position of

1 Confidential Secretary for the HR Department,  
2 it would hinder sensitive personnel work and  
3 collective bargaining coming due over the next  
4 two years and ongoing grievance negotiation  
5 preparations. This is a huge stretch. And I  
6 think the bottom line is that we just could not  
7 afford that position.

8 There was also an allocation of  
9 \$120,000 for part-time short-term interns whose  
10 duties were not specified. Look, I was an  
11 intern -- probably one time in our careers all  
12 of us on Council we were interns, unpaid  
13 interns. I never received a paid internship.

14 And certainly the financial  
15 condition that we're in as a City, it would be  
16 great to pay interns. We can't afford it. The  
17 Mayor which I agree 100 percent with her had an  
18 intern program this year which was paid through  
19 the state.

20 I would urge her to do that again in  
21 2021, if possible. But to have \$120,000 for  
22 funding we just could not afford that. And  
23 what Council did there was take that funding  
24 and we fully funded ECTV.

25 Transparency is very important to

1           this Council. If we did not fund ECTV, you  
2           wouldn't be able to watch these meetings and  
3           know and get a look at what goes on in your  
4           local government. So we made sure to fund  
5           that.

6                       There was no funding for the  
7           Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority. I know  
8           due to the pandemic there's a lot of people in  
9           the City who use the heritage valley trails  
10          throughout Scranton. We actually have an  
11          agreement with the LHVA to fund a certain  
12          percentage from our budget. So Council  
13          restored that funding.

14                      And also, we restored some funding  
15          for the Everhart Museum because I know that due  
16          to the pandemic, of course, like everyone else  
17          they're struggling. The one thing that I do  
18          take major, major issue with and I think it was  
19          a total inaccurate statement and a  
20          mischaracterization is Council stripped away  
21          funding for demolition for blighted structures  
22          and that the City would be now limited in  
23          taking down blighted structures throughout the  
24          City.

25                      If the residents of Scranton only

1 read the Mayor's letter and didn't read the  
2 budget or didn't read Council's response, you  
3 may think that Council just ripped the  
4 demolition budget apart and didn't include  
5 anything.

6 That makes no sense at all. This  
7 Council -- and for the seven years I've been on  
8 Council have been yelling and working with the  
9 neighborhoods about blight, working with South  
10 Side, Minooka, West Scranton, Green Ridge, the  
11 Hill Section and so on throughout every section  
12 of our City.

13 What Council did was reallocated  
14 \$30,000 from the demolition line item to  
15 veterans organizations throughout our City who  
16 like everyone else are hurting. So we took  
17 that \$30,000 and we reallocated to veterans  
18 organizations.

19 The budgeted amount for demolition  
20 was set at \$200,000. Thirty thousand dollars  
21 off would be \$170,000. Now, keep in mind there  
22 is \$198,000 currently in an account in OECD for  
23 demolition. So for the Mayor to make the  
24 statement that this Council stripped away  
25 funding for demolition as if we don't care



1           about taking down blighted structures is a  
2           total mischaracterization and actually is not  
3           true at all.

4                     The other thing that I'd like to  
5           point out here is that the 2020 budget, which  
6           Mayor Cignetti operated under had funding for  
7           demolition in the amount of \$145,000. And as  
8           far as I could tell with the information that I  
9           was provided, the City has not spent any of  
10          those funds this year.

11                    So if they're so concerned about  
12          taking down blighted structures, why has no  
13          money been spent from that line item as far as  
14          I could see with the information I was  
15          provided.

16                    Another example in 2019, the City  
17          budgeted 150,000 for demolition, only \$20,775  
18          was spent. So again, there is money for  
19          demolition. There's more money for demolition  
20          even than was the case for the past few years.  
21          And, quite frankly, if I thought that taking  
22          \$30,000 from a demolition line item would have  
23          affected blight throughout our City or affected  
24          that program, I wouldn't have done it.

25                    I certainly would not have done it.

1 But because of the information, because of the  
2 money that was already in the accounts, I felt  
3 we could make that move to help our veterans  
4 out. Also another point on blight. Let's  
5 remember that Council voted to hire a  
6 professional experienced company to come in and  
7 do a top down review of the LIPS Department.

8 The LIPS Department was a source of  
9 contention and controversy during the  
10 Courtright Administration. We felt that was  
11 important. Barry Isett and Company was hired  
12 and the Mayor put that on the shelf and that  
13 analysis has not been done. I know they're  
14 going to take that inhouse. But I just wanted  
15 to make that point.

16 In addition to the creation of a  
17 dozen new positions, the Mayor's proposed  
18 budget included large raises for department  
19 heads including proposing increases of over  
20 \$100,000. The Mayor's proposed budget also  
21 included haphazard raises for a select few  
22 unionized employees whose salaries should be  
23 determined in my opinion by their unions'  
24 collective bargaining agreement with the City.

25 What was all the more troubling

1           about these proposed increases to expenditures,  
2           was that the Mayor's budget did not have a plan  
3           to pay for any new revenue streams. Look,  
4           again, I'll go back to your household in the  
5           City of Scranton.

6                     If you're going to buy a new car or  
7           a new boat and you don't have the income, you  
8           have to figure out a way to pay for it. And we  
9           understand -- this Council understands this  
10          isn't our money. This isn't Monopoly money.  
11          It certainly doesn't grow on trees as we all  
12          have witnessed over the last seven years.

13                    So if you're going to add a million  
14          dollars -- almost a million dollars in  
15          expenditures to the budget, you've got to come  
16          before Council and explain how you're going to  
17          pay for those expenditures. Now, we respect --  
18          Council respects all of our dedicated City  
19          employees and recognizes that compared to other  
20          similarly sized cities throughout the State of  
21          Pennsylvania, the salaries for many positions  
22          in the Mayor's cabinet are low. They are low.

23                    That is a fact. There has been a  
24          salary study done. And the numbers bear that  
25          out. Knowing that, Council approved fair,

1           equitable and reasonable raises of 5 percent  
2           for the Mayor's department heads instead of the  
3           Mayor's proposed increases which in some cases  
4           gave department heads a nearly 40 percent  
5           increase in salary, 40 percent.

6                       We're in the middle of a pandemic.  
7           There are people who are losing their jobs.  
8           There are small businesses in our City and  
9           throughout our county and our state and country  
10          which are closing their doors, and yet we're  
11          supposed to approve some department head  
12          increases of nearly 40 percent.

13                      This was outrageous. It was  
14          uncalled for, especially in light of the  
15          distressed status of the City and the financial  
16          uncertainty going into 2021 that, of course, is  
17          caused by the pandemic.

18                      Now again, if the residents of  
19          Scranton only read the Mayor's letter, which  
20          again, there was many mischaracterizations and  
21          many inaccuracies in that letter. If you only  
22          read that letter, you would come to the  
23          conclusion that Council simply took a hatchet  
24          and gutted the Mayor's budget and attempted to  
25          handicap her administration for next year.

1                   That is simply not true. There is  
2                   not a morsel of truth to that. What Council  
3                   did was took the fiscally responsible approach  
4                   and scaled things back and worked towards what  
5                   we all felt was a compromise.

6                   The Mayor's claim that Council  
7                   restricted contingency funding, again, simply  
8                   not true. Mayor Cignetti presented several  
9                   options in her budget to close the 4 and a half  
10                  million dollar shortfall projected for 2021.  
11                  The Mayor's request was to tap into 6 million  
12                  dollars in excess workers' compensation reserve  
13                  funds that were originally earmarked for  
14                  creation of other post employment benefits  
15                  trust fund.

16                  Council rejected the Mayor's request  
17                  to raid the excess money from the workers'  
18                  compensation fund because we believe that the  
19                  days of allocating one-time revenue sources to  
20                  close an annual budget shortfall should be over  
21                  because this represents irresponsible and  
22                  shortsighted fiscal policy.

23                  Instead, the City should use the  
24                  excess money from the workers' compensation  
25                  reserve fund to make long term investments to

1 cover future retiree costs which ultimately  
2 would result in a lower total cost for  
3 providing post employment benefits.

4 It's a smart financial move. It was  
5 recommended by the City's auditor a few years  
6 ago. And I know that it was looked very  
7 favorably by the financial community within the  
8 City.

9 Accordingly, Council determined that  
10 debt refinancing was the best option for the  
11 long-term fiscal health of the City. As I  
12 mentioned, many people throughout our City are  
13 suffering from the devastation caused by this  
14 pandemic.

15 Many residents have lost their jobs  
16 and small businesses in the City have closed  
17 their doors. Council believes that it would  
18 not only be responsible, but it would also be  
19 disrespectful to City residents and small  
20 businesses who are suffering economic hardships  
21 to support the Mayor's proposals for new  
22 positions and massive salary increases.

23 We constantly ask the people of  
24 Scranton to do more with less. Why shouldn't  
25 our City Government do the same? So during

1           these challenging times, City Government needs  
2           to deliver essential services in a reasonable  
3           and responsible manner.

4                     Ultimately the budget that was  
5           crafted by Council and passed unanimously,  
6           scaled back the raises for management employees  
7           considerably and eliminated what we believe to  
8           be several unnecessary positions.

9                     Our budget is fiscally responsible.  
10          We also have to remember that just a few short  
11          weeks ago in December of 2020, the Pennsylvania  
12          Economy League reported to Council that the  
13          City has a structural deficit where revenues  
14          are not keeping pace with expenditures.

15                    There was no way in good conscience  
16          that Council could approve Mayor Cagnetti's  
17          budget which added nearly 1 million dollars to  
18          our bottom line. And I find it hard to believe  
19          that the Mayor and her administration would be  
20          so quick to forget that the Pennsylvania  
21          Economy League is also projecting that in 2022  
22          and 2023, we will have deficits of I think  
23          about 5 million dollars and then 8 million  
24          dollars.

25                    So, you know, it's -- it doesn't add

1 up. It doesn't make sense. As the Chief  
2 Executive and leader of the City, the Mayor has  
3 the responsibility to either sign or veto the  
4 City's annual budget. In this instance, the  
5 Mayor did neither.

6 Instead of vetoing the budget that  
7 she apparently opposed and presenting Council  
8 with an alternative plan, the Mayor decided to  
9 air her grievances with the approved budget in  
10 the media.

11 I think we were all disappointed  
12 that the Mayor didn't reach out to Council to  
13 raise her issues with the budget which was  
14 approved on December 15th. But we extend our  
15 hand of friendship and we remain optimistic  
16 that we could work together to address the  
17 needs of our great City in the coming year.

18 For the year 2020, I personally and  
19 I know that everyone on this Council worked  
20 hand-in-hand with Mayor Cignetti. I have high  
21 hopes for 2021. But I certainly cannot allow  
22 the Mayor's letter with so many  
23 mischaracterizations and inaccuracies to go  
24 unchecked.

25 So I felt the need -- and I know



1           that all of us felt the need to respond to that  
2           because again, if you read the Mayor's letter,  
3           you would think that, you know, we just took a  
4           couple of pieces of paper and a sharpie and  
5           just started X-ing things out.

6                       There was a rationale behind every  
7           amendment that Council made. And some of the  
8           amendments were because we had to balance the  
9           budget and include expenditures that were not  
10          originally included in the original budget that  
11          was presented to Council.

12                      So again, I look forward to working  
13          with the Mayor in 2021. And I look forward to  
14          staying within the confines of the budget that  
15          Council presented. And again, I personally  
16          believe that it was a compromise that we were  
17          able to meet in the middle. And that's all I  
18          have on that. Thank you. Anyone else? Any  
19          comments on the Third Order items? Okay.

20                      If not, received and filed. Do any  
21          Council members have any announcements at this  
22          time? No announcements? Okay. I have one.  
23          If you notice on our agenda, there's been the  
24          addition of an Eighth Order. So we have Fifth  
25          Order, Sixth Order, Seventh Order. We've added

1 Eighth Order. And it's titled Old Business.

2 This section is going to be utilized  
3 when legislation has been previously tabled and  
4 a motion is intended to be made to place it in  
5 position for a vote. This will enable the  
6 public to be aware that the piece is being  
7 brought back as well as the ability to view on  
8 the City's website again and offer comment  
9 prior to a vote.

10 And this was a recommendation made  
11 by our Solicitor, Kevin Hayes and our City  
12 Clerk, Lori Reed. Any other announcements?  
13 Okay. Very good. Mrs. Reed?

14 MS. REED: FOURTH ORDER. CITIZENS  
15 PARTICIPATION.

16 MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you. At this  
17 time would someone please make a motion to  
18 accept public comment from the following  
19 individuals: Patricia Nestor, Bev deBarros,  
20 Marie Schumacher and Fay Franus?

21 MR. DONAHUE: I make a motion to  
22 accept public comment.

23 MR. SCHUSTER: Second.

24 MR. GAUGHAN: There's been a motion  
25 and second to accept public comment.

1 Mrs. Reed, would you please read the comments  
2 into the record?

3 MS. REED: Thank you. The first  
4 submission is from Patricia Nestor as follows:

5 It's always Nay Aug, Nay Aug, Nay  
6 Aug.

7 Capouse Pool is the Jan Brady of  
8 city parks.

9 If the city can put all the effort  
10 into Nay Aug Pool with feasibility studies and  
11 grant seeking, why can't they do the same for  
12 the Penn Ridge Swim Complex?

13  
14 MS. REED: The second submission  
15 supplied by Bev deBarros as follows:

16 Dear Friends

17 This is to thank you for your good  
18 work for us over the past year, but, most  
19 especially during the month of November as you  
20 crafted the 2021 Budget.

21 As you considered the proposal, line  
22 by line, your collective wisdom and common  
23 sense, showed a knowledge of and respect for  
24 us, your fellow Scranton residents.

25 I write this with heartfelt

1 appreciation however, I was deeply disappointed  
2 at your poor judgement over the issue of the  
3 Fire Chief having a second job.

4 I was stunned, really, that it even  
5 got as far as Council ~ that the Mayor and  
6 the Chief, himself, found this acceptable  
7 I have so much to say on the subject ~ but,  
8 for now ~ I hope that every time John Judge  
9 leaves Scranton and is out of the city for  
10 hours and days each week ~ that a substitute  
11 person is clearly put in the leadership role  
12 for when a fire erupts and life and death  
13 decisions are needed immediately.

14 Do I need to remind you of the Jan  
15 6, 2008 fire on Ash Street that took 3  
16 lives? That house, somewhat boarded up, at  
17 808 Ash St, is still standing, yet 3 people  
18 perished.

19 MS. REED: The third submission is  
20 from Fay Franus as follows:  
21 Council,

22 I want an answer to this question as  
23 soon as you are done reading letters from the  
24 residents. A yes or no reply.

25 Did council go over these 55

1           amendments to the budget with the Mayor? If yes  
2           how often.

3                     If not why not? I want to hear a yes  
4           or no reply then you can explain the reasons  
5           for your yes or no reply.

6                     I did not hear one word last week  
7           from you of what Mayor Cagnetti thought about  
8           your 55 changes. This is why I am very curious  
9           if you even consulted with her.

10  
11                    What this council has done with  
12           these 55 amendments is going to set this city  
13           back years,. You say you want to move the city  
14           ahead, NO you do not. You deliberately cut  
15           Mayor Cagnetti off at the knees by slashing 55  
16           times any hopes of moving this city forward.

17  
18                    You want Scranton to stay in the  
19           stone ages! You didn't even give the Mayor a  
20           chance for change. Oh I can already hear your  
21           phony explanations as to why you did what you  
22           did. All five of you should be totally ashamed  
23           of yourselves.

24                    The people in Scranton elected Paige  
25           Cagnetti to help us get out of where we have

1           been for 22 years. We put our trust in her.  
2           Much more than you did.

3  
4                   We counted on Mayor Cagnetti to  
5           take brave steps, put out new ideas, bring in  
6           change. That is exactly what she did and you  
7           ignored all she wanted to implement.

8  
9                   She and her administration had a  
10          clear vision to make Scranton a city people  
11          wanted to live in not leave.

12                   But the five of you stomped all over  
13          their vision.

14  
15                   How do you justify taking money from  
16          demolition?

17                   People have waited years and years  
18          to have condemned houses torn down to bring up  
19          the value of their properties and for health  
20          and safety reasons as well.

21  
22                   Mayor Cagnetti has started to make a  
23          dent in that progress. The first Mayor ever to  
24          do so. Try telling the families who live in  
25          those neighborhoods with condemned properties

1           that you felt there was enough money in  
2           demolition to take care of all the properties  
3           that need to be torn down.

4  
5                    You would be lying if you even dared  
6           trying saying so.

7  
8                    Mayor Cagnettis letter to the  
9           residents was compassionate and had a deep  
10          concern to address and take care of so many  
11          issues the people have had for years.

12  
13                   Finally HOPE! Hope you took away.  
14          And you simply did not care!

15  
16                   You all sit up there and just say  
17          whatever you want-- not much based on fact  
18          --just your opinions.

19                   Well your opinions are costing the  
20          city dearly. In every department in the  
21          administration.

22  
23                   Mayor Cagnetti wanted to create new  
24          jobs and give raises. Did you ever stop to  
25          think " Let's trust the Mayor's judgement on

No !

Not any of you wanted to broaden your view on how Scranton can grow. Shocking!

Did you ever stop to think that  
maybe job creations and pay raises are  
inevitable in moving forward.

To have qualified people in government you most certainly should be paying them what they are worth. It is a win win for the citizens. God forbid you should take that position.

Seriously why don't you do the people in Scranton a huge favor--have Mayor Cignetti come in to a meeting and go over the 55 amendments with her face to face.

I strongly believe you owe that much to the citizens. All we heard is what you said at last weeks meeting with no response from the mayor. Pretty sneaky if you ask me.

It is never too late to be honest --



1 never to late to admit you were wrong--  
2 never too late to allow all of us to hear the  
3 back and forth debate on these amendments--NOT  
4 just YOUR side. Will you do this for us? That  
5 is another question I really would appreciate  
6 an answer to.

7  
8 What the five of you did affected  
9 every one of us and may for years to come.

10  
11 You certainly had a chance to bring  
12 Scranton into a new bright era and you blew  
13 it. Do the right thing and reverse your  
14 budget!

15  
16 MS. REED: The fourth submission is  
17 from Marie Schumacher as follows:

18 O I would like a clearer  
19 explanation of how 5C is to help the citizens'  
20 of Scranton; looks as though we are just  
21 picking up someone else's bill.

22 O Please have someone from the  
23 Administration come to explain how they are  
24 going to keep 2021 overtime costs under control  
25 and explain how 2020 got so off track.

1                   0 I would like to encourage Mr.  
2                   Gaughan to read the Sunday Legal Notice for the  
3                   upcoming Council Meeting; only 5th, 6th and 7th  
4                   Order items are included. The 3K item of the  
5                   15 December 2020 Meeting (the 39 pages of  
6                   Budget Amendments) would not have appeared .  
7                   Getting close to the cutoff so I'll sign off.

8  
9                   (Concludes Citizens comments as  
10                  submitted to Council.)

11  
12                  MS. REED: That concluded the  
13                  Citizens Participation.

14                  MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you, Mrs. Reed.  
15                  There's been a motion and second to accept  
16                  public comment. On the question? On the  
17                  question, a few things. Miss Schumacher had  
18                  asked about overtime. And I do have an  
19                  explanation at least for the Police and Fire  
20                  Department on the overtime figure because I did  
21                  ask the Business Administrator, Carl Deeley.  
22                  So I'll report on that in Fifth Order.

23                  Miss Schumacher commented about the  
24                  Sunday legal notice and the budget amendments.  
25                  Council did its job. We published the Council

1           amendments on the agenda as we always do.

2                   The administration did not put the  
3           agenda on the website because of some kind of  
4           technical issue with the company that runs the  
5           server and I did explain that last week. So  
6           that was not the fault of Council.

7                   As for Miss Franus with her question  
8           about did we go over the 55 amendments of the  
9           budget with the Mayor, number one, a  
10          significant amount of the amendments actually  
11          are to make sure that the budget was balanced.

12                   And those were conversations that we  
13          had with the Mayor and the Business  
14          Administrator once we identified that there  
15          were costs and expenditures that -- in the  
16          amount of over a quarter of a million dollars  
17          that were not included. So that's number one.

18                   Number two, Council submitted the  
19          amendments to the Mayor and the Business  
20          Administrator for their review. Their response  
21          that we got back was the response that is on  
22          our agenda tonight, the letter that we received  
23          from the Mayor.

24                   So as we mentioned in our letter,  
25          the Mayor had the opportunity to veto the

1 budget and present an alternative plan or  
2 present an argument.

3 And then, you know, maybe Council  
4 could have been swayed. I don't know. But  
5 that's usually the way that it goes. The Mayor  
6 decided not to do that. And that is her right.  
7 Look, Council is doing its job here. Let's  
8 remember that for a minute.

9 I've been on councils in the past  
10 where the Mayor's budget has just been stamped  
11 and that was it. Council looked at every --  
12 and I know I looked at every single line item.  
13 And thank God that we did because there was  
14 mistakes. Anyone could make a mistake. I have  
15 made mistakes in the past.

16 When you look at numbers long  
17 enough, sometimes you make mistakes. I'm  
18 simply pointing out that we did our due  
19 diligence with this budget. And you could  
20 agree or disagree with it. But we did our due  
21 diligence and we followed the process that is  
22 in place.

23 So I think that the budget we put  
24 forward as I mentioned earlier was fiscally  
25 responsible. And again, we didn't gut the

1 Mayor's budget. We didn't take a hatchet out  
2 and just start X-ing things out of the Mayor's  
3 budget.

4 We took a measured approach. And  
5 for those positions which there was more than a  
6 dozen of them, we looked at what we could  
7 afford and what was going to be redundant or  
8 what we felt was inefficient, for example, the  
9 Chief of staff. I don't remember a mayor in my  
10 lifetime and maybe I'm wrong, having a Chief of  
11 Staff.

12 Does it sound good? Sure. Would it  
13 be good? Maybe. In the environment that we  
14 are in financially, in the environment that  
15 we're in with the deficits we're looking at  
16 moving forward, we put many of these positions  
17 in and in two or three years we're coming back  
18 and we're taking them out because we're going  
19 to need to cut someplace again.

20 And guess what? 80 percent of our  
21 budget is already set in stone. We're already  
22 contractually obligated to pay roughly  
23 somewhere in the area of 80 percent -- maybe  
24 75, 80 percent of our budget.

25 So again, we didn't take everything

1 out. We took everything out what we felt was  
2 not -- we couldn't afford and was not good for  
3 the citizens of Scranton. Anyone else on the  
4 question? All those in favor signify by saying  
5 aye.

6 MR. SCHUSTER: Aye.

7 MR. MCANDREW: Aye.

8 MR. DONAHUE: Aye.

9 DR. ROTHCHILD: Aye.

10 MR. GAUGHAN: Aye. Opposed? The  
11 ayes have it and so moved.

12 MS. REED: FIFTH ORDER. 5-A.  
13 MOTIONS.

14 MR. GAUGHAN: Councilman Schuster,  
15 do you have any motions or comments at this  
16 time?

17 MR. SCHUSTER: I guess I'm just  
18 going to make a couple quick comments. I think  
19 you covered it pretty well. You went through  
20 all of those points there. I think I'm going  
21 to start off by saying, you know, a lot of the  
22 things that came out of the administration this  
23 year they weren't treated as business as usual.

24 And I think the same thing should go  
25 for the budget. I think this budget was

1           treated as business as usual and I don't think  
2           there is any excuse for that.

3                     Every business owner in the City is,  
4           I mean, injured, limping, you know what I mean,  
5           and to add 12 position and raises at this  
6           particular time I didn't think was right. When  
7           we were briefed by PEL, they did let us know of  
8           the creeping structural deficit that was coming  
9           in. You had mentioned it Mr. Gaughan.

10                    We had about a 3 percent increase in  
11           expenditures per year with a stagnate revenue  
12           of about 1 percent. And to add those positions  
13           and raises would add another percent to that  
14           budget. So we'd be going up 4 percent per year  
15           in expenditures with 1 percent in revenue which  
16           just does not make sense.

17                    So with this uncertainty, I wasn't  
18           able to add that 1 percent to the budget. Like  
19           I said, you went through a lot of those points.  
20           But when we're looking at the debt refinancing,  
21           according to that letter that we seem to be  
22           backing the administration into a corner.

23                    But I think the debt refinancing was  
24           the way to go. And I think it had a two-fold  
25           method to it. The marketing and refinancing

1           that we're making up that 4.5 million shortfall  
2           as well as some of these things needed to be  
3           refinanced anyway with the interest rates that  
4           they're at right now.

5                       So not only are we making up that  
6           shortfall, but we're also putting the City in a  
7           better situation going into the future which I  
8           think should be noted.

9                       Also, some of the information that  
10          was coming out was that we're running a budget  
11          surplus this year. So they're my comments.  
12          And if you guys could tell me any different  
13          when it comes to what the administration has  
14          been putting forward with the COVID  
15          reimbursements?

16                      I know the first initial piece was  
17          about 825,000. I know right now the county is  
18          giving about 500,000 in reimbursements. But I  
19          know that number coming out of the  
20          administration has been growing. And I'm not  
21          quite sure what that is. But I'd like to  
22          request a tentative list of what we are  
23          spending or what we are submitting to the  
24          county for that COVID reimbursement.

25                      So if you guys -- if Council feels



1           that we've had an answer to that, I'll try to  
2           get that information together. But if not, I'd  
3           like to make a motion to request a definitive  
4           list of what's been spent and what's been put  
5           forward for reimbursement.

6                     MR. GAUGHAN: There's a motion on  
7           the floor. Is there a second?

8                     MR. DONAHUE: Second.

9                     MR. GAUGHAN: Motion on the floor  
10          and a second. On the question? On the  
11          question, I do know that Director Cipriani from  
12          OECD submits to Council the cost that they're  
13          going to ask that they be reimbursed. I did  
14          ask a question about it maybe two or three  
15          weeks ago.

16                    And she did provide a breakdown of  
17          what's been -- I have to go back and look. But  
18          I think she did provide a breakdown of what's  
19          been submitted. I can't remember if she  
20          provided a breakdown of what's actually been  
21          reimbursed by the county yet. So -- but I  
22          think we can -- I'll be in favor of it.

23                    MR. SCHUSTER: Yeah, I think a  
24          definitive list. Thank you.

25                    MR. GAUGHAN: Anyone else on the

1 question? Okay. All those in favor of the  
2 motion by Councilman Schuster signify by saying  
3 aye.

4 MR. SCHUSTER: Aye.

5 MR. MCANDREW: Aye.

6 MR. DONAHUE: Aye.

7 DR. ROTHCHILD: Aye.

8 MR. GAUGHAN: Aye. Opposed? The  
9 ayes have it and so moved. Do you have  
10 anything else, Tom?

11 MR. SCHUSTER: No, that's all.

12 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. Councilman  
13 McAndrew, any comment motions or comments?

14 MR. MCANDREW: Yeah, I have quite a  
15 few. I reserved my comments about the budget  
16 for Fifth Order. So I agree with you,  
17 President Gaughan, you know, budgets are made  
18 through compromise and disagreements, all  
19 right? And this is nothing personal.

20 I disagree with my wife every day  
21 and we're still married 32, 33 years. I might  
22 be wrong with that. But this amended budget  
23 was one of compromise and fiscal  
24 responsibility, all right?

25 So initially -- I want to start from

1 the beginning of the process. Mr. Schuster and  
2 I sat down with the Mayor and the Business  
3 Manager to review the proposed budget, you  
4 know, we did that without violating the  
5 Sunshine Act we met in groups, all right?

6 And then at night it was stated to  
7 us there was a shortfall. The shortfall for  
8 the budget was a million dollars, all right?  
9 The next day we were told it was 4.5. So that  
10 concerned me. That was in the very beginning.  
11 All right.

12 So the same budget presented to us  
13 which was with a 4.5 million dollar shortfall  
14 which presented to us unbalanced. All right.  
15 But included in that million dollars added to  
16 the budget were 12 new positions, one being a  
17 Chief of Staff. All right. So this isn't the  
18 west wing.

19 I don't know where we're coming from  
20 with a Chief of Staff. Also included in the 1  
21 million dollars added to our budget with a 4.5  
22 million dollar shortfall, there were large  
23 increases for a select few -- some not even  
24 working for the City a year. Of course, I had  
25 a problem with that.

1                   At the same time having increases in  
2                   this budget for people that aren't even here a  
3                   year that they neglected or forget to put  
4                   hundreds of thousands of dollars in the budget  
5                   for contractual increases that we had to  
6                   provide for DPW and the police.

7                   And, you know, let's not make any  
8                   mistake. I'm also for modernization of the  
9                   City. I want to move the City forward. But in  
10                  the midst of a global pandemic with such  
11                  uncertainty, the citizens of this City deserve  
12                  like I said from the beginning, there's need to  
13                  have and nice to have.

14                 All right. I've always made my  
15                 decisions and they've always been formulated by  
16                 my own thought process so based on what I  
17                 believe is always what's in the best interest  
18                 of the taxpayer. So in the end I could live  
19                 with this budget.

20                 There's some people out there that  
21                 might disagree. But I own my vote. And I'm  
22                 very happy and proud of my colleagues with  
23                 coming up with this amended budget that we can  
24                 all live with.

25                 Secondly, as Chairman of the Public

1 Safety Committee, it's been brought to my  
2 attention by a few people that, you know,  
3 during the past few snowstorms we have  
4 sidewalks on bridges, one on Linden, a couple  
5 throughout the City that aren't being  
6 shovelled.

7 So I don't know what the protocol  
8 is. I don't know what the process is or how  
9 it's done or where it's done or why it's done.  
10 I would just like to, you know, some  
11 information if Mrs. Reed could please reach out  
12 to, you know, maybe the DPW department or City  
13 Hall and just provide me with these answers to  
14 questions that are being posed to me. (Audio  
15 interruption.)

16 MR. DONAHUE: Mark, you --

17 MR. GAUGHAN: Mark, we can't hear  
18 you.

19 ATTY. HAYES: Mark.

20 MR. MCANDREW: -- congratulate him  
21 and wish him well on his retirement.

22 MR. DONAHUE: Mark.

23 MR. MCANDREW: What.

24 MR. DONAHUE: After you brought up  
25 the sidewalks you sort of went out a little

1 bit. Every point after that you could start  
2 over with.

3 MR. MCANDREW: This happens every  
4 meeting. All right. So can you hear me now?

5 ATTY. HAYES: Yes.

6 MR. DONAHUE: Yes.

7 MR. MCANDREW: I need one of them  
8 towers that we just voted on maybe in front of  
9 my house -- or didn't vote on. All right. So  
10 Sammy Vitrus, all right, his last day of work  
11 was yesterday, 41 years of dedicated service to  
12 the City in DPW.

13 His retirement officially is Friday.  
14 So I want to wish him a very happy retirement  
15 and wish him well and thank him again for all  
16 of his service. And then the sidewalk thing  
17 just -- I want some information if Lori can  
18 reach out to, you know, the City or DPW or  
19 both. That is all I have. Thank you.

20 MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you. Dr.  
21 Rothchild, any motions or comments?

22 DR. ROTHCHILD: Yes, just a few.  
23 First off, I hope everyone enjoyed their  
24 holidays. I know it was really different for a  
25 lot of people this year. But this is a new

1           year. I'm excited about what 2021 holds for  
2           the City of Scranton.

3                       And I don't want to rehash a lot of  
4           the points that have already been up with  
5           regards to the budget. You know, I think that  
6           they are all valid points and, you know, I do  
7           stand by my vote on the amendments and the  
8           budget that we had passed.

9                       You know, I understand that there  
10          are disagreements with the Mayor and her  
11          administration about some of those changes that  
12          we had included in there. But I know that it  
13          was fair and a compromise and something that at  
14          least our Council could all agree on. We all  
15          unanimously voted for it.

16                      So you know, I do -- and I said it  
17          in the past that I do appreciate the vision  
18          that the Mayor is bringing to this office and  
19          to this City and with her proposals and the  
20          discussions that we've had with them over the  
21          past couple of months regarding the budget.

22                      We just didn't, you know, I think I  
23          speak on behalf of everyone that we just didn't  
24          feel that was all possible this year and would  
25          prefer to see some of those changes made

1 incrementally. But we did add several new  
2 positions.

3 We did include raises. You know, I  
4 know that the salaries are still at least for  
5 department heads are still very far behind  
6 other cities. And I would like to see us catch  
7 up to that. With each year I continue to be  
8 open in ways that we can do that.

9 I still have concerns about the  
10 potential revenue loss with COVID-19 and even  
11 if it wasn't as bad as we anticipated for 2020,  
12 you know, there are a lot of struggling  
13 businesses and people throughout the City. And  
14 I think, you know, I'd rather err on the side  
15 of caution but continue to work towards  
16 bettering the City and setting up for our  
17 future.

18 I just as much as anyone want to  
19 move us forward. You know, I don't think that  
20 this was a backward step in any way. And that  
21 was all that I had for comments tonight. Thank  
22 you.

23 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. Thank you very  
24 much. Councilman Donahue, any motions or  
25 comments?



1                   MR. DONAHUE: Yes. Thank you. I  
2                   just want to -- first, I want to also  
3                   congratulate Sam Vitris on his retirement from  
4                   DPW this week and to express my, you know, our  
5                   extreme gratitude for his over 40 years of  
6                   service to the citizens of the City of  
7                   Scranton.

8                   Just to touch -- Mark, on the  
9                   sidewalk thing, that's -- that has definitely  
10                  been an issue going back. And I think that  
11                  goes back to not having enough boots on the  
12                  ground to actually get that done. But we 100  
13                  percent need to -- because it's always -- the  
14                  Spruce Street corridor is always bad, Linden  
15                  Street, Lackawanna coming into the City from  
16                  West Side.

17                  And there's a couple others  
18                  throughout the City. But we do need to figure  
19                  out a way to get those done because there are a  
20                  lot of people that, you know, walk in and out  
21                  of the City to go -- whether it's to go to  
22                  work, you know, to go to some of the stores  
23                  down there or whatnot.

24                  But that is definitely something --  
25                  and that has been an ongoing issue. I know

1           last year we brought up, you know, in  
2           conversations with the University about maybe  
3           helping us with this Spruce Street viaduct  
4           there.

5                       But because of insurance issues,  
6           they wouldn't agree to do that. So a lot of  
7           times when you go by there you'll see that the  
8           one section is clean in front of Fitzgerald  
9           Field. But, you know, there's two sections  
10          that aren't clean.

11                      The University cleans it but they  
12          won't, you know, help us out there because of  
13          some insurance issues I guess. But it's  
14          definitely something we need to address. And  
15          I'm also not going to rehash, you know, all the  
16          arguments both made in our letter that appeared  
17          this morning and, you know, what my colleagues  
18          brought up.

19                      I just want to bring up one point  
20          about the surplus and structural deficit that  
21          was mentioned in the Mayor's letter. Yes, we  
22          are looking at ending 2020 with a surplus.  
23          There's still some reconciliations that need to  
24          be done there to figure out how much of a cash  
25          surplus.

1 But that is basically because of  
2 what we didn't spend money on. I know  
3 Councilman Gaughan mentioned the not spending  
4 the money on the liner for Nay Aug pool. We  
5 didn't do the Licensing and Inspection  
6 department review. We didn't do a paving  
7 program this year. You know, the list goes on  
8 there of what we didn't spend money on.

9 So although I appreciate, you know,  
10 the administration's management ability, it's  
11 not like we have this huge surplus because, you  
12 know, we just cut all of this waste. We have  
13 this cash surplus for 2020 because we didn't  
14 spend money. And it's things that we're going  
15 to have to continue to spend money on moving  
16 forward.

17 In terms of the structural deficit,  
18 I mean, for her to say that, you know, that the  
19 revenue loss is laid out in the 2021 budget  
20 represents the impact of COVID-19 and not a  
21 structural deficit, I don't believe that is  
22 entirely true.

23 We do have a structural deficit.  
24 And it is not this administration's fault.  
25 This goes back years due legacy costs, due to

1           an outdated tax structure we were operating  
2           under. And they need to be fixed. But I, you  
3           know, we do have to have a structural deficit  
4           once, you know, when your expenditures far  
5           outpace -- when your increasing expenditures  
6           far outpace your (inaudible) and revenue year  
7           over year. That's what a structural deficit  
8           is.

9                       And, I mean, to say -- I think  
10           that's just disingenuous. We really need to  
11           acknowledge the fact that it's there and not --  
12           that's something that we need to work on going  
13           into union negotiations, you know, over the  
14           course of the next year. That's all I have to  
15           add on the budget part.

16                      One request I have, Miss Reed,  
17           there's -- I've sent a couple requests to  
18           License and Inspections about a property at  
19           2208 Prospect Avenue regarding vehicles in the  
20           yard. I know we've gotten a response that it  
21           was going through the magisterial system. I  
22           think that was our last response.

23                      But can we send a response to the  
24           License and Inspections Director asking for an  
25           update on, you know, where the situation stands

1           with that property? And that's all I have.

2                   MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you, Councilman  
3 Donahue. I have a few comments. First, I'd  
4 also like to wish Sam Vitris a good retirement.  
5 You know, in this day and age to spend over 40  
6 years in one position is remarkable to say the  
7 least.

8                   And knowing Mr. Vitris the past few  
9 years, he is someone who has integrity. He's a  
10 dedicated -- was a dedicated City employee. He  
11 actually cared deeply about the City. And if I  
12 ever had any questions about snow or anything  
13 related to the DPW, he was the first person  
14 that I was calling because he has so much  
15 experience down in that department.

16                   He wasn't only a good employee.  
17 He's just a good person in getting to know him  
18 over the last few years. He comes from a great  
19 family. And the other thing that has to be  
20 mentioned here is that, you know, he's a person  
21 that served over 40 years for the City through  
22 nine mayors, nine different administrations and  
23 he was also the President of the Local 235.

24                   He was the Union President for a  
25 very long time. And he fought valiantly for

1           the workers at the DPW. And that's not always  
2           an easy job. And he did it with honor and with  
3           integrity. So I want to wish again Mr. Vitris  
4           a happy and healthy retirement and thank him  
5           for all of the work -- all of the hard work  
6           that he did over the last 40 years. And he  
7           will definitely be missed.

8                       I also want to again, I mentioned at  
9           the top of the meeting the unspeakable tragedy  
10          regarding one of our firemen Steven Sunday who  
11          passed away last week. And I just again want  
12          to say how sorry I am for his family. It was  
13          just an unbelievable loss I know for his family  
14          and for the City. And he will definitely be  
15          missed.

16                      I also want to mention that if  
17          everyone could keep a friend of mine who I went  
18          to school with -- actually another DPW worker  
19          Eric Bower. He was involved in a really bad  
20          accident up on East Mountain, ATV accident. So  
21          if everyone could keep him and his family in  
22          their thoughts and prayers.

23                      I just also have a couple items  
24          related to City business. And the first one is  
25          the City back in 1976 instituted an

1 entertainment fee. And this was a fee that  
2 businesses throughout the City would pay in the  
3 amount of \$500 annually.

4 So anyone who has any sort of  
5 entertainment, bars, restaurants anything like  
6 that they would pay \$500. So the City sent  
7 bills out to establishments within the last few  
8 weeks for 2021. And I received a few calls  
9 from business owners for obvious reasons, you  
10 know, why should they pay \$500 when there's  
11 probably not going to be any entertainment for  
12 quite some time.

13 And these are businesses that are  
14 already hurting for money. I went back and  
15 looked in the 2021 budget and I believe the  
16 amount of revenue that this fee brings in is  
17 roughly \$20,000. It's not going to be a huge  
18 hit to our budget.

19 So what I would like to do is ask  
20 the administration if they will work with  
21 Council and they can work with Council to pass  
22 legislation to waive that fee for 2021 if at  
23 all possible just for the pure fact that it  
24 really doesn't make sense to have businesses  
25 who are already just getting crushed under the

1 weight of the pandemic to pay an additional  
2 \$500 for a service that they're not providing.

3 So, Mrs. Reed, if you could send  
4 correspondence to the administration so we can  
5 get that conversation started. And I'd like to  
6 do that, you know, sooner rather than later  
7 because some of these people are getting these  
8 bills and they're scrambling. Again, I  
9 received a few calls on that.

10 The second thing I would like to  
11 mention is the 2019 audit. We did -- I asked  
12 Mrs. Reed to ask for an update on this. We  
13 still do not have the 2019 audit. According to  
14 Kelly Lindsey from the Kohanski Company, the  
15 City's auditor, there's still open items that  
16 have to be rectified.

17 I bring this up, number one,  
18 absolutely unacceptable as I mentioned before  
19 that we still do not have the audit. Number  
20 two, Lori and I received an e-mail from DCED,  
21 the Department of Community and Economic  
22 Development. And it stated in this e-mail that  
23 this would be the third notification that they  
24 sent the City from the Center for Local  
25 Government Service for a report that has to be



1           filed -- an annual audit and financial report.

2                   I'm not sure if that was filed. I  
3           believe you need the 2019 audit to file it.  
4           I'm not positive though. But I would like to  
5           check, Mrs. Reed, if that has been filled. And  
6           if not, I'm sure it's incumbent upon the  
7           receipt of the 2019 audit.

8                   My concern there is that according  
9           to the Pennsylvania law, municipalities that  
10          have not filed this audit with DCED by December  
11          31st will be flagged for noncompliance and the  
12          communities will be ineligible for DCED grand  
13          funding until that AFR -- until that report has  
14          been filed.

15                  So I think we need to double-check  
16          on that. That's important. The other thing I  
17          mentioned, Kevin, if we could check again with  
18          the administration on updating -- and I'm sure  
19          they're working on this. But I know we have to  
20          update or we should update the memorandum of  
21          understanding with ECTV regarding the new  
22          funding stream that they're going to get from  
23          the City in terms of keeping them operable for  
24          2021.

25                  So there is one in place. But I

1 think we need to update that. Mrs. Reed, I  
2 have a question regarding OECD paving projects  
3 for 2021. I'd like to know how much funding  
4 there is total and just a status update on  
5 where OECD is with the paving project for next  
6 year.

7 I know in January paving really  
8 isn't on the mind yet. But that does come  
9 quickly. So I'd like to know where they are in  
10 the process. There was also a resident before  
11 December 15th -- I can't remember the exact  
12 date -- but asked about \$28,000 in COVID relief  
13 reimbursement for the City that they were  
14 trying -- the City was looking for website  
15 updates.

16 And that gentleman wanted to know  
17 specifically a breakdown of the \$28,000 cost  
18 and whether or not that was reimbursed by the  
19 county I believe he wanted to know. So, Mrs.  
20 Reed, if you could please follow up with the  
21 administration. That was a few weeks ago that  
22 we had forwarded that that gentleman was  
23 looking for an answer. I don't want to ignore  
24 him.

25 Also, there was questions that Miss

1 Schumacher and I think Miss Franus might have  
2 asked before December 15th. As far as I know,  
3 we haven't received any response from the  
4 administration. But if you could double-check  
5 on that, Lori, I'd appreciate it.

6 Also, Miss Schumacher had asked  
7 about overtime. Obviously, the City is over  
8 budget in overtime for 2020. And I did ask the  
9 Business Administrator to provide justification  
10 for overtime in the Police and Fire  
11 Departments.

12 And I asked if some of those costs  
13 are reimbursable. And Mr. Deeley did get back  
14 which I appreciate rather quickly. And I just  
15 want to read his response into the record. He  
16 said that for the Police Department, they're  
17 currently running with seven fewer officers due  
18 to terminations and retirements.

19 They currently have eight officers  
20 that are off the road injured. They also have  
21 several officers on administrative leave most  
22 of the year. The City plans to hire at least 7  
23 to 10 officers in January of 2021. But it will  
24 not totally eliminate the overtime at that time  
25 because they have to still go through the field

1 training program for several months after they  
2 go through Act 120. So that was the  
3 explanation given there.

4 For the Fire Department, he states  
5 that the Fire Department worked the majority of  
6 2020 under the budgeted number of personnel due  
7 to retirements in August of 2020. The  
8 department was operating with nine vacancies,  
9 which resulted in the need for overtime.

10 The savings would have covered the  
11 increase for the overtime salary had it not  
12 needed to be transferred to cover the severance  
13 payments for the other salary. And I think I  
14 mentioned that -- the explanation for the other  
15 salary which I had asked about a few weeks ago.

16 Thirty -- no, \$3,006,45 is expected  
17 to be reimbursed from FEMA. And the current  
18 amount of COVID-19 related overtime is  
19 \$80,908.02. And he states that overtime costs  
20 due to COVID had been submitted as part of the  
21 CARES Act reimbursement request.

22 It's his understanding that this  
23 will not be reimbursed. And the next step is  
24 to apply for reimbursement from the Federal  
25 Emergency Management Agency, FEMA. So he did

1 provide those responses.

2 I had additional questions about  
3 overtime. Controller, John Murray submitted  
4 his overtime report to Council and to the  
5 administration which will be in our Third Order  
6 next week. And there's a few things that I  
7 want to go through really quick.

8 So the first one is in the final  
9 report for 2020, the DPW overtime for  
10 administration is -- it was budgeted the \$250  
11 for 2020. This is only \$250 that we felt was  
12 needed for overtime and \$5,861.91 was spent in  
13 overtime in the administration.

14 So I would like a justification for  
15 why that amount of money was spent. Also, I  
16 could be wrong; but in my few years on Council,  
17 I've never seen overtime spent in OECD. I  
18 don't know that that's reimbursable from HUD,  
19 from the Department of Housing and Urban  
20 Development.

21 But there was overtime in the amount  
22 of \$1,157.69. I'd like justification for that.  
23 I believe I brought up overtime in the Law  
24 Department before. Again, we budgeted zero  
25 dollars in the Law Department, yet somehow we

1           spent over a thousand dollars there.

2                     It's a -- small but still, there was  
3           nothing budgeted for it in 2020. So for the  
4           total overtime amount in 2020 according to  
5           Controller Murray's report, \$1,473,750 was  
6           budgeted in 2020.

7                     The total spent at this point was  
8           \$2,209,205.03. And that's a total overage of  
9           over \$700,000. So I would like justification  
10          on those additional points that I just made.

11                    Also, I have a question just really  
12          about the rules and the process. And I did  
13          ask -- Solicitor Hayes had forwarded us all  
14          information about the acting titles of  
15          department directors.

16                    So right now we do have an acting  
17          Police Chief who I think is doing a wonderful  
18          job. But I would like to request from Mayor  
19          Cognetti some kind of explanation or timeline  
20          on when we're going to receive legislation  
21          naming a Police Chief, not an acting Police  
22          Chief.

23                    The Mayor appointed an acting -- as  
24          she termed it interim Police Chief which was  
25          effective September 12th, 2020. It's now

1           January. And, Solicitor Hayes, if you could  
2           just explain -- I think what you sent us  
3           according to the Administrative Code says that  
4           if you appoint someone in an acting capacity,  
5           they only have 35 days. That applies to the  
6           cabinet department officials?

7                     ATTY. HAYES: Right. So under the  
8           Administrative Code, the Mayor may appoint  
9           acting department directors for a period not to  
10          exceed 35 days. After 35 days, the acting  
11          director must either be approved as permanent  
12          or dismissed. And no acting director could be  
13          reappointed to that classification for a period  
14          of six months.

15                    So I don't -- the term interim is  
16          not defined or used in the City Code. So I  
17          don't know what the classification means. You  
18          either are the permanent director or you're the  
19          acting director at least under the City Code as  
20          far as I could tell.

21                   MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. Thank you.  
22          Could you reach out to the --

23                   ATTY. HAYES: Just to be clear, I  
24          know all department -- all directors of  
25          departments that are specified in the City Code

1 including the Police Chief, the Fire Chief have  
2 to be approved by Council to that appointment.

3 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. So could you  
4 reach out to the Law Department and -- or the  
5 HR Department and just ask them what's going on  
6 with that? And again, I think Chief Mecca's  
7 doing a wonderful job.

8 I just want to make sure we're, you  
9 know, following the rules and the process  
10 that's in place in the Administrative Code.

11 ATTY. HAYES: To that point,  
12 Councilman Schuster, had requested that I reach  
13 out to the HR Department to see who else is  
14 serving in an acting or interim capacity. And  
15 I'll follow up with that and forward your  
16 request as well.

17 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. Great. Thank  
18 you so much. That's all I have for tonight.  
19 Mrs. Reed?

20 MS. REED: Thank you. 5-B. FOR  
21 INTRODUCTION – AN ORDINANCE – AMENDING FILE OF  
22 THE COUNCIL NO. 118, OF 2017, ENTITLED “AN  
23 ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND OTHER  
24 APPROPRIATE OFFICIALS OF THE CITY OF SCRANTON  
25 TO TAKE ALL NECESSARY ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT THE



1 CONSOLIDATED SUBMISSION FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING  
2 AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS TO BE FUNDED  
3 UNDER THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT  
4 (CDBG) PROGRAM, HOME INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP  
5 (HOME) PROGRAM AND EMERGENCY SOLUTIONS GRANTS  
6 (ESG) PROGRAM FOR THE PERIOD BEGINNING JANUARY  
7 1, 2018" BY AMENDING THE 2018 ACTION PLAN BY  
8 UTILIZING FIFTEEN THOUSAND (\$15,000.00) DOLLARS  
9 UNDER THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT  
10 (CDBG) PREVIOUSLY ALLOCATED TO BOYS AND GIRLS  
11 CLUB PARK IT PROGRAM TO HELP LOW INCOME MOTHERS  
12 RETAIN SUITABLE HOUSING THROUGH ST. JOSEPH'S  
13 CENTER'S MOTHER INFANT PROGRAM.

14 MR. GAUGHAN: At this time I'll  
15 entertain a motion that Item 5-B be introduced  
16 into its proper committee.

17 MR. DONAHUE: So moved.

18 MR. SCHUSTER: Second.

19 MR. GAUGHAN: On the question? All  
20 those in favor signify by saying aye.

21 MR. SCHUSTER: Aye.

22 MR. MCANDREW: Aye.

23 MR. DONAHUE: Aye.

24 DR. ROTHCHILD: Aye.

25 MR. GAUGHAN: Aye. Opposed? The

1           ayes have it and so moved.

2                   MS. REED: 5-C. FOR INTRODUCTION -  
3           AN ORDINANCE - AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND  
4           OTHER APPROPRIATE OFFICIALS OF THE CITY OF  
5           SCRANTON TO ENTER INTO A LEASE AGREEMENT WITH  
6           THE KEYSER VALLEY CITIZENS ASSOCIATION, INC.  
7           FOR USE OF THE PREMISES COMMONLY KNOWN AS  
8           KEYSER VALLEY COMMUNITY CENTER LOCATED AT 101  
9           NORTH KEYSER AVENUE, SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA  
10          18504 FOR A THREE-YEAR PERIOD COMMENCING  
11          JANUARY 1, 2021 AND ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2023.

12                   MR. GAUGHAN: At this time I'll  
13          entertain a motion that Item 5-C be introduced  
14          into its proper committee.

15                   MR. DONAHUE: So moved.

16                   MR. SCHUSTER: Second.

17                   MR. GAUGHAN: On the question?

18                   MR. SCHUSTER: On the question,  
19          Solicitor Hayes, can you just take a look at  
20          that lease agreement and make sure everything  
21          is in order?

22                   ATTY. HAYES: Yes, sir.

23                   MR. SCHUSTER: Thank you.

24                   DR. ROTHCHILD: On the question, do  
25          we know -- they didn't really specify, you

1 know, what purposes they want to use the  
2 Community Center. I mean, I think it's great  
3 that they're willing to lease it to us. But I  
4 didn't really have a clear understanding of --

5 ATTY. HAYES: It's for community  
6 events, no other purpose. Do you want that  
7 further specified? It just says that -- it  
8 says the grantee shall use the leased premise  
9 for facility for community events and for no  
10 other purpose.

11 DR. ROTHCHILD: Yeah, I'm wondering  
12 what types of community events out of  
13 curiosity, like, what it would be utilized for  
14 if it's because we don't have space elsewhere  
15 to do those types of things or -- yeah, I'm  
16 just wondering.

17 ATTY. HAYES: Okay. I'll get  
18 further clarification on that.

19 DR. ROTHCHILD: Okay. Thanks.

20 ATTY. HAYES: No problem.

21 MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you. Anyone  
22 else? All those in favor signify by saying  
23 aye.

24 MR. SCHUSTER: Aye.

25 MR. MCANDREW: Aye.

1 MR. DONAHUE: Aye.

2 DR. ROTHCHILD: Aye.

3 MR. GAUGHAN: Aye. Opposed? The  
4 ayes have it and so moved.

5 MS. REED: 5-D. FOR INTRODUCTION -  
6 A RESOLUTION - AUTHORIZING APPOINTMENT OF  
7 BRAD KOVALESKI, PHD, 529 BOGART COURT, APT.  
8 201, SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA 18503 AS A MEMBER  
9 OF THE BOARD OF ETHICS, EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1,  
10 2021. DR. KOVALESKI WILL BE REPLACING  
11 CAROL MIGLIORINO WHOSE TERM EXPIRED AUGUST 31,  
12 2020. DR. KOVALESKI WILL BE APPOINTED TO A  
13 THREE (3) YEAR TERM EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2021  
14 AND WILL EXPIRE AUGUST 31, 2023.

15 MR. GAUGHAN: At this time I'll  
16 entertain a motion that Item 5-D be introduced  
17 into its proper committee.

18 MR. DONAHUE: So moved.

19 MR. SCHUSTER: Second.

20 DR. ROTHCHILD: Second.

21 MR. GAUGHAN: On the question? On  
22 the question, I'm looking at Mr. Kovalski's  
23 resume. He's I think very, very qualified for  
24 this Ethics Board position. And I want to  
25 thank Controller Murray for putting forward his

1 name, number one.

2 And number two, there is still an  
3 opening on the -- there's one opening on the  
4 Ethics Board and that would be Council's  
5 choice. We did recently appoint someone to the  
6 other opening that was our choice as well,  
7 maybe two or three months ago.

8 We put two advertisements in the  
9 paper but we did not get anyone to submit a  
10 resume or letter of interest. So if there is  
11 anyone out there that would like to serve on  
12 the Ethics Board, we would love to have you.  
13 So if you'd like to submit your resume or  
14 letter of interest, please do so.

15 And then any Council members if you  
16 want to share that as well to anyone in the  
17 community. We do need somebody to serve in  
18 that capacity. Anyone else on the question?  
19 All those in favor of introduction signify by  
20 saying aye.

21 MR. SCHUSTER: Aye.

22 MR. MCANDREW: Aye.

23 MR. DONAHUE: Aye.

24 DR. ROTHCHILD: Aye.

25 MR. GAUGHAN: Aye. Opposed? The

1 ayes have it and so moved.

2 MS. REED: 5-E. FOR INTRODUCTION -  
3 A RESOLUTION - AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND  
4 OTHER APPROPRIATE CITY OFFICIALS FOR THE CITY  
5 OF SCRANTON TO ENTER INTO A LOAN TO GRANT  
6 AGREEMENT AND MAKE A LOAN/GRANT FROM  
7 THE CITY OF SCRANTON'S BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY  
8 LOAN TO GRANT PROGRAM, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO  
9 EXCEED \$90,000.00 TO LAVISH BODY & HOME LLC. TO  
10 ASSIST AN ELIGIBLE PROJECT.

11 MR. GAUGHAN: At this time, I'll  
12 entertain a motion that Item 5-E be introduced  
13 into its proper committee.

14 DR. ROTHCHILD: So moved.

15 MR. DONAHUE: So moved.

16 MR. SCHUSTER: Second.

17 MR. GAUGHAN: On the question? All  
18 those in favor of introduction signify by  
19 saying aye.

20 MR. SCHUSTER: Aye.

21 MR. MCANDREW: Aye.

22 MR. DONAHUE: Aye.

23 DR. ROTHCHILD: Aye.

24 MR. GAUGHAN: Aye. Opposed? The  
25 ayes have it and so moved.

1 MS. REED: 5-F. FOR INTRODUCTION -  
2 A RESOLUTION - AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND  
3 OTHER APPROPRIATE OFFICIALS OF THE CITY OF  
4 SCRANTON TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH  
5 SCRANTON AREA FOUNDATION, INC., TO  
6 ESTABLISH THE CITY OF SCRANTON CARES ACT  
7 CDBG-CV GRANT FUND, A PASS THROUGH FUND WHICH  
8 WILL DISTRIBUTE GRANTS TO VARIOUS SMALL  
9 BUSINESS THROUGHOUT THE CITY OF SCRANTON AS  
10 PART OF THE CITY OF SCRANTON CARES ACT CDBG-CV  
11 GRANT FUND DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

12 MR. GAUGHAN: At this time I'll  
13 entertain a motion that Item 5-F be introduced  
14 into its proper committee.

15 MR. DONAHUE: So moved.

16 DR. ROTHCHILD: Second.

17 MR. GAUGHAN: On the question? All  
18 those in favor of introduction signify by  
19 saying aye.

20 MR. SCHUSTER: Aye.

21 MR. MCANDREW: Aye.

22 MR. DONAHUE: Aye.

23 DR. ROTHCHILD: Aye.

24 MR. GAUGHAN: Aye. Opposed? The  
25 ayes have it and so moved.

1 MS. REED: SIXTH ORDER. 6-A. No  
2 business at this time.

3 SEVENTH ORDER. 7-A. No business at  
4 this time.

5 EIGHTH ORDER: Old Business.  
6 Nothing at this time.

7 MR. GAUGHAN: Thank you. If there  
8 is no further business, I'll entertain a motion  
9 to adjourn.

10 MR. DONAHUE: Motion to adjourn.

11 MR. GAUGHAN: Okay. This meeting's  
12 adjourned. Thanks everyone. Stay safe.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I hereby certify that the proceedings and evidence are contained fully and accurately in the notes taken by me of the above-cause and that this copy is a correct transcript of the same to the best of my ability.

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Maria McCool, RPR  
Official Court Reporter

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